

5688

NATIONAL SECURITY COUNCIL
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20508

Executive Registry

88-2912X

August 4, 1988


OCA FILE WH / OGA / Rep
Herger
Plus all 38 Members
that Signed

MEMORANDUM FOR BRIGADIER GENERAL WILLIAM M. MATZ
Executive Secretary
Department of Defense

MR. H. LAWRENCE SANDALL
Executive Secretary
Central Intelligence Agency

SUBJECT: Letter Regarding SR-71 from Congressman Herger

General Powell requests that the attached letter be given to
Secretary Carlucci and Judge Webster for information.


Paul Schott Stevens
Executive Secretary

Attachment
Letter from Congressman Herger,
dated July 28, 1988

File:

Rep Herger; McEwen;
McCurdy; Bliley;
Stump; Lukens;
Gallegly; Dreier;
Boucher; Lewis;
Dornan; Bilirakis;
Darden; Hammerschmid
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AUG 1 1988

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 28, 1988

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OCEANOGRAPHY

Lt. Gen. Colin Powell
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Gen. Powell:

During the past several months, I have been one of a number of Congressmen who have actively opposed plans to reduce the SR-71 strategic reconnaissance program. Fortunately, both the House and the Senate have agreed to provide additional funding for the program in the 1989 D.O.D. bills.

In spite of our success on Capitol Hill, the Department of Defense has recently concluded plans to recommend elimination of the program by the beginning of the 1990 fiscal year. The decision was made in spite of the strong opposition on the part of both Secretary of State George Shultz and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency William Webster. The Department of State and the CIA rely on data collected by the SR-71 in order to make accurate decisions on critical national security issues. In fact, during a classified briefing I attended in February, the Air Force itself argued that the program was essential to this nation's security in times of crisis.

Unfortunately, unless the White House intervenes at this time, the D.O.D. will proceed with plans to gradually phase out the system during the coming fourteen months. This would leave us without a critical tool in our intelligence gathering package. As Secretary Shultz argued in his letter, "...important national security and foreign policy interests are best served by retaining the unique capability this aircraft offers."

For these reasons, thirty-eight of my colleagues in the House of Representatives have joined me in signing the enclosed letter to President Reagan. They represent a significant number of Republicans and Democrats who strongly believe that the program should be retained. I encourage you to review our concerns and urge the President to support the SR-71.

Sincerely,

Wally Herger
Wally Herger
Member of Congress

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

July 28, 1988

The Honorable Ronald Reagan
President of the United States
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

You have been a strong supporter of the SR-71 strategic reconnaissance program for several years. The two letters that you wrote in support of the program during the 1987 fiscal year helped to gain Congressional approval of needed improvements and upgrades to the platform. As a result, the SR-71 remains not only the fastest and highest flying aircraft in the world, but an invaluable tool for our intelligence community.

For these reasons, both Secretary of State George Shultz and Director of the Central Intelligence Agency William Webster have written letters within the past two months to Secretary Carlucci to express their dismay over Department of Defense plans to eliminate the program by the end of the 1989 fiscal year. Furthermore, in a recent classified briefing to Congress, the Air Force emphatically defended the program and re-emphasized its importance in light of recent events in the Middle East and elsewhere.

The SR-71 is uniquely qualified to meet these and other assignments. It provides high-quality, wide area synoptic coverage using a variety of sensors, including radar, photo, and ELINT. Its ability to alter its flight-path or return for a second or third pass over the same area, as well as its proficiency in acquiring data in inclement weather or on short notice all constitute significant advantages over overhead systems. As Secretary of State Shultz pointed out in his letter, ". . . the SR-71 generally complements (rather than duplicates) satellite coverage."

Additionally, as the Pentagon itself has pointed out on a number of occasions, our satellite force is becoming increasingly vulnerable to Soviet threats, including both conventional and advanced anti-satellite measures. An active SR-71 program guards against the day that a part or all of our overhead imagery might not be fully operable.

The Honorable Ronald Reagan

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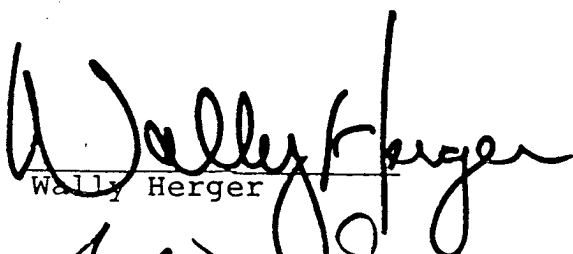
July 28, 1988

Given this information, we find it difficult to understand the rationale behind the D.O.D.'s decision to eliminate the program. While we certainly sympathize with the severe budgetary constraints that have been imposed by the recent budget-summit agreement, we do not believe that the SR-71 can be sacrificed until an effective replacement is designed. If the current budget environment remains unchanged, it is doubtful that we could afford a follow-on to the aircraft. Intelligence experts inform us that even given a more favorable budget situation, such a system is at least several years from completion. We also believe it is important to recognize that shutting down the SR-71 program could cost between \$1 billion and \$2 billion, equal to the cost of running the program at current levels for five to ten years. This does not include the approximately \$3.8 billion that we have invested in equipment currently used by the program, including supplies in the warehouse, sensors, test equipment, and the aircraft themselves. (Another \$5.4 billion is invested in equipment that is not in use at this time).

Furthermore, not only has the cost of the program been reduced by 50% during the past two-years, but we believe that the value of the program can not be measured solely in terms of dollar amounts. To shelve the SR-71 would be to severely degrade our critical intelligence capabilities. National security dictates that the program be retained.

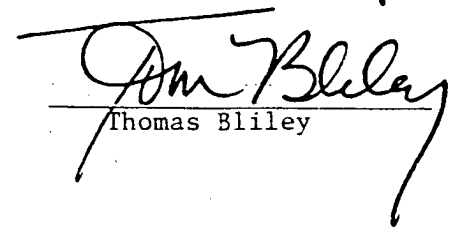
If the program is to be saved at this time, we believe that Presidential intervention will be required. We would hope that you would personally review the pertinent data, and support the position taken by Mr. Shultz and Judge Webster backing the program. We appreciate your time and effort in this matter.

Sincerely,


Wally Herger


Bob McEwen


Dave McCurdy


Thomas Bliley

Bob Stump

Bob Stump

Elton Gallegly

Elton Gallegly

Rick Boucher

Rick Boucher

Robert Dornan

Robert Dornan

George "Buddy" Darden

George "Buddy" Darden

Edward J. Markey

Edward J. Markey

Carlos Moorhead

Carlos Moorhead

George E. Brown

George E. Brown

Robert T. Matsui

Robert T. Matsui

Robert Badham

Robert Badham

Buz Lukens

Donald "Buz" Lukens

David Dreier

David Dreier

Jerry Lewis

Jerry Lewis

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John Paul Hammerschmidt

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Charles Wilson

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Gerald Solomon

James Courter

James Courter

Beverly Byron

Beverly Byron

The Honorable Ronald Reagan

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Bill Thomas



Clyde C. Holloway



Robert Walker



Richard Arme



Stan Parris



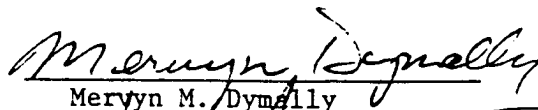
W.G. "Bill" Hefner



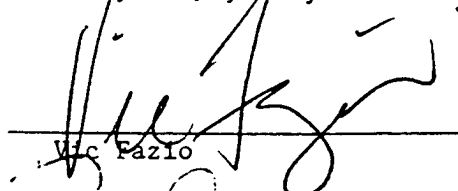
Jack Kemp



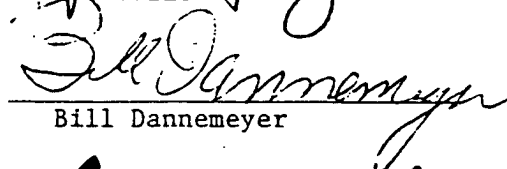
Dan Coats



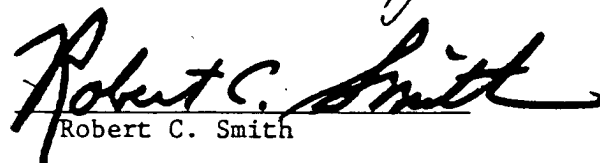
Mervyn M. Dymally



Vic Fazio



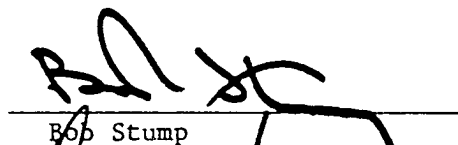
Bill Dannemeyer



Robert C. Smith




Norman D. Shumway



Bob Stump



Andy Ireland



Robert Davis